during Nov-Dec. 1995 did not register negative growth. Exports during April-Dec. 1996 are placed at US $ 24204.83 million representing a dollar growth of 6.36% over exports of the corresponding period in the previous year. Trade deficit during Apr-Dec. 1996 is placed at US $ 3247.56 million.

Export promotion is a continuous exercise and steps are being taken from time to time to sustain export growth through policies and procedures, improved bilateral relations and consultation with trade & industry.

Use of subsidised power by export oriented units

143. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention have been drawn to the editorial in Pioneer, dated 16th January, 1997 captioned A Power-Hungry Prime Minister;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) whether the 25 export oriented industrial units actually produced and exported large quantity of their products to justify the subsidised power;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the criteria adopted to keep a check on the export oriented industries using subsidised power for producing commodoites for export to justify the loss in the power sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (e) Yes, Sir. In conformity with Government Policy to encourage exports, the Ministry of Power has decided to supply power at NTPC tariff plus wheeling charges to 100% Export Oriented Ferro Alloy Units or units with furnaces totally earmarked for export purposes where electricity bill accounts for 35% or more of their cost of production to enable them to compete in the international market. The arrangement is subject to a six monthly review. The units have been asked to furnish detailed information of their production & export during the period July to December, 1996 with documentary evidence.

Registration of patents under WTO agreement

144. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) number of patents registered or applied for registration of patents under the WTO Agreement;

(b) the names of the companies who have applied for registration and the names of the products; and

(c) the names of the countries who have applied for the same products which India and applied?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Proposal for a 'Free Trade Area' in Eastern Region

145.SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal under consideration for a 'Free Trade Area' in the Eastern Region involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India; and

(b) if so, the details and the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.